



Cultural Overlay District Advisory Committee

MEETING 4 SUMMARY, September 5, 2008

ALL Committee members were present: Paul Breckenridge, Liz Dunn, Randy Engstrom, Stephanie Ellis-Smith, Jerry Everard, Pat Graney, Hallie Kuperman, Matthew Kwatinetz, Fidelma McGinn, Richard Muhlebach, Joyce Pisnanont (for Fen Hsiao), Jim Reinhardtsen, Robert Sondheim, Cathryn Vandenbrink, Paige Weinheimer.

City of Seattle attendees: Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, Chris Godwin (City Council Central Staff), Rebecca Herzfeld (City Council Central Staff), Michael Killoren (Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs), Dennis Meier (Department of Planning and Development).

Consultant staff: Kjristine Lund, Natalie Quist, Dennis Sellin

Guest: Jim Kelly, 4Culture

1. Introductory remarks

The meeting began at 2:05 pm. Councilmember Rasmussen welcomed attendees, and described a complementary effort that he is sponsoring, regarding the conservation of neighborhood character in the Pike/Pine corridor. Much of the focus of that study, nearing completion, will be on land use and zoning changes or incentives to encourage the retention of older buildings of character in the Pike/Pine neighborhood are retained. Three CODAC members (Liz Dunn, Matthew Kwatinetz, and Robert Sondheim) were interviewed as neighborhood stakeholders for the Pike/Pine study. Some of the results of the study which complement CODAC's work include the fact that Pike/Pine contains the predominant number of arts-related uses in the Capitol Hill area, and that its older buildings are, in many cases, the places where art is performed or presented. A public presentation of recommendations is scheduled for October 14, and legislation is expected to be sent to the Council in November 2008.

A question was asked by a committee member about retaining the envelopes of existing older buildings to be retained, in order to conserve neighborhood character while allowing development. Staff responded that "character buildings" in the Pike/Pine neighborhood will be identified, in order that zoning and legislative proposals can be brought forward to allow creative and adaptive re-use of them. Several developments of this type have already been done successfully in the Pike/Pine neighborhood.

2. Framing recommendations

The co-chairs opened the meeting, and gave as well as entertained several comments on the intent and expectations for this final meeting of the committee:

The work of this committee will have a level of detail that will be commensurate with what can feasibly be accomplished in four meetings over six weeks. This committee has been able to:

- Raise certain issues to the surface for possible further exploration; and
- Identify priorities that can guide an appropriate allocation of resources to this effort.

Further, it is important to keep people—city council members, staff, neighbors, and colleagues—aware of our activities, and aware that more work is going to be needed. This project could benefit from a further phase, but whether that will happen is not known.

The co-chair identified some principles for recommendations:

- keep the study focused;
- this study should become a model for other districts in the city;
- there are parallel initiatives (such as the Pike/Pine conservation study and Sound Transit underground rail transit construction) that must be linked to this effort, and leveraged;
- certain issues, such as the transfer of development rights, are important to our topic area, but have implications in a much broader geographic area.

The fact that this committee has brought together and aligned the interests of the arts and cultural community with those of real estate and finance is unique, and should be noted.

3. Facilitated discussion: vision, tools, innovations, priorities, timing

Discussion followed on the three topic areas that were the subject of a working session at the August 20 meeting: policy and vision, tools, and innovations. Committee members' priorities were discussed, as was the timing of recommendations and their public presentation.

a. Policy and vision

This piece states the case for the need, and addresses its urgency. Discussion centered around terminology or “jargon” used in the document, and whether it makes the complete case for the CODAC effort.

Members agreed that jargon or ambiguous terms, such as “manifesto” and “culturally significant,” should be replaced with more clear, strategic, and appropriate terms. The bulleted items in the document, minus the jargon, could become the framework for the CODAC’s goals.

This document must introduce CODAC, and the place of the cultural landscape in the urban context. It should begin with a discussion of urbanization and infrastructure. The cultural landscape must be placed within the context of infrastructure, in order to give this effort a seat, with dignity, at the table of discussion. Beyond quality of life, arts and culture deal with competitiveness on a regional, national, and global scale.

This document must also create a sense of urgency around the issue of the loss of arts-related space. Animate the discussion with examples, both positive and negative. Some of

the positive examples where the City has helped to create public space for the arts include: Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, Hiawatha Community Center, Sand Point, Seward Park Clay Studio, Green Lake Bathhouse Theatre, and Spectrum Dance Theater.

However, this must not be a blank request simply for “space.” We must identify cultural needs, and not simply “wants”. Who are the organizations that could be tenants? What can they afford? What are their sizes and needs? How do we appropriately match needs with space? What are the tools we offer to build or make available that space? Finally, how can we maximize the use of publicly owned space for community use? We can make an impact where we (the City) have control over facilities and land.

By offering solutions, we can demand equity.

b. Borders

Two notions from previous meetings came forward: scarcity and spines. An argument in favor of limiting the size of the district involves not diluting it, and keeping its benefits scarce, which would keep it desirable.

Using the Capitol Hill/First Hill Urban Center as a boundary line, the committee wishes to focus upon several key spines or corridors where cultural and artistic activity takes place and should be emphasized. Pike/Pine is certainly one of those. Broadway, especially in the area above the to-be-built Sound Transit underground station, could be another. Twelfth Avenue, from approximately E. Denny Way south through the Seattle University campus, could be a third spine.

c. Tools and Innovations

We have identified an array of potential tools, without much specificity. We know that there are costs associated with these tools, as well as actors, but we do not yet know what or who they are. Our document should reflect that we do not know all of the answers, but that we have raised what we believe to be the most important questions.

From this array of tools, the committee identified several that should be priorities. Listed below, in no preferential order:

- Establish a cultural development “translator” or liaison position. This would be a full-timed paid City staff person who understands cultural development and investment, as well as real estate and finance principles;
- Reinvest in and reinvigorate the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs’ SPACEfinder web-based tool;
- Establish zoning incentives for providing space for arts and cultural organizations, using the defined study area as a pilot;*

* On Sept. 10, the Mayor published his recommendations on incentive zoning. The public benefits eligible for the incentive are housing, open space, childcare and historic preservation—arts and cultural uses are not on the list. The group may want to specifically address this, as the legislation will be reviewed by the Council this fall in Sally’s committee. Here’s the link to the info about the proposal:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Incentive_Zoning_Program/Overview/

- Create partnerships and alignment of public benefits, with Sound Transit and Capitol Hill Housing as immediate priorities;
- Work with nearby major institutions (particularly Seattle Central Community College and Seattle University) to create opportunities;
- Establish a public development authority for cultural development in Seattle;
- Provide education for policy makers on the importance of arts and culture to the economy and health of the community;
- Explore practical and realistic ways to create cultural venues and encourage retention of existing ones, including relaxing codes making City facilities available, and using tax credits;
- Create a cultural certification that becomes a City priority, similar to LEED.

d. Timing

There is currently a high level of interest among some Councilmembers, and a “policy window” that is open for CODAC. Therefore, there is no question but that we must move forward with recommendations. There are City priorities for granting incentives, such as for affordable housing, open space, and transit-oriented development. Our intent is to have cultural space be among those priorities.

A date has already been set for the presentation of CODAC’s recommendations to a joint meeting of city council: Wednesday, September 24, at 2:00 pm, at Council chambers.

The presence of all CODAC members at this joint meeting would be helpful to our efforts, as well as any others you can bring along. Associated efforts, such as a letter signed by all committee members, would also be useful.

e. Presentation

Present a narrative in a language that makes sense and is compelling.

NonFiction Media did a video presentation that committee members found to be effective:

http://www.nonfictionmedia.com/mov_ArtistDocuPortrait.htm

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm.